

*The Perfection of the Spirits of the
Just in their Separate State,*

Consider'd and Applied.

19
IN A
SERMON
UPON THE
DEATH

Of the REVEREND

Mr. Edward Prime,

Late of SHEFFIELD,

Who deceased the 26th of April, 1708.

And at the Request of his RELATIONS now
made publick.

By ROBERT FERN.

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W. May, ave



TO THE
READER.

READER,

IF thou be truly Christian, it is a bright Article of thy Character, that thy Conversation is in Heaven, (Col. 3. 20.) Thither thy Mind is daily ascending by inquisitive Search, and believing Contemplation; there thy Affections lodge and dwell; of that thou hast the sweet Foretastes, in frequent, inward, spiritual Communion with thy God; thence thou fetchest thy Excitements to laborious Diligence in thy general and particular Calling, and thy Encouragements under all the Conflicts and Trials of thy present State; thence thou lookest for the Saviour, and there thou hopest to be for ever with thy dearest Lord, and with the always-perfect, and more lately-perfected just Spirits. If such thou art, a Discourse of that Heavenly Country (of which Kind is this thou now hast in thy Hands) cannot but be highly welcome to thee.

When we lose the Sight of our dearest pious Friends, and leave their frail Remains in the silent Earth, to converse with Clods and Worms, it cannot but minister to sad and melancholy Thoughts; but here distincter Apprehensions, and a stronger Faith, would be our sure and full Relief: Tho' our Friends die, our Lord lives; and since he lives, we and they shall also live, and that to die no more. (John 14. 19.)

To the READER.

An Anchor cast within the Vail, (*Heb. 6. 19.*) would keep us tight and steady, in the midst of all those Storms and Hurricanes that annoy this lower World, threatening to overturn our Faith, baffle our Hopes, destroy our Confidence, and dispossess us of our Souls. How great Help, in such a Case, the due Perusal of the following serious and judicious Sermon (of one dear to me by long and intimate Friendship) may yield, I had rather thy own happy Experience should inform thee, than any Encomiums of mine, which Strangers might suspect of Flattery.

The Excellent Person, at whose Funeral this was preached, was to me, many Years, as a Father, instructing, counselling, comforting of me, and his Name and Memory will always be of the most precious wish to me. His true, tho' brief Character, you have towards the close of the following Pages. May the Lord continue to give his People many such Pastors after his own Heart, and then our Jerusalem will still be (even when Hell and Rome, and all their Partisans have done their worst) a Praise in the Earth. (*Fer. 3. 15. Isa. 62. 7.*) And tho' an Infidel, profane, hypocritical Generation think and speak of, and treat them as not fit to live, (*Acts 22. 22.*) their lasting Epitaph will be, of whom the World was not worthy. (*Heb. 11. 38.*) May I be number'd with them, and finish like them, and I have enough. That the Divine Blessing may abundantly accompany what is here offered to thy View, that if thou art not, thou mayst be hereby render'd; and if thou art, thou mayst be yet made more meet to partake of an Inheritance among the Saints in Light, (*Col. 1. 12.*) and pass an Eternity with the Spirits of just Men made perfect, in the Regions of Joy and Bliss above, is the hearty Prayer of

Crutched-Friars,
Mar. 13. 1711.



An unworthy Servant
of Christ and Souls,

John Billingsley.

HEB. XII. last Clause of 23^d Verse.

----- *And to the Spirits of Just Men
made Perfect.*

THESE Words contain a glorious Privilege and Advantage of the *Christian Church*, (amongst many others mentioned in the Context, beyond what was enjoy'd under the *Jewish Dispensation*.)

To compleat the Sense we must bring down the Clause at the beginning of the preceding Verse to the Text, (as to every Article of the Verse) and read it thus: *But ye are come to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven: And ye are come to God the Judge of all: And ye are come to the Spirits of just Men made perfect.* As if he had said; By the many additional Privileges that ye are instated in, ye are come both to the *Church militant* on Earth, and to the *Church triumphant* in Heaven. Ye are come to the former, by being entred into a *special Relation and Fellowship* with it; which is now become a more illustrious and excellent Community and Society than it was heretofore; as the high Characters that are given to it do demonstrate, as the *City of the living God*, the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, with the others following. "And ye are come to the latter, by a clearer Discovery and fuller Manifestation of the future Life of Blessedness, *Life and Immortality being brought to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. by a Right and Title to the glorious Enjoyments they are in possession of; by the present Fellowship and Communion ye have with 'em by Faith and Love; and in that ye are growing up to a State of Perfection, and are near to an actual Conjunction with 'em, in that happy State they are already arriv'd unto. The Saints on Earth and the Saints in Heaven make but *one Family*, Eph. iii. 15. *Our Christ* is the same with *theirs*, both are acted by the same Spirit, govern'd by the same Head, and shall in a little while be conducted to the same Glory. Thus is the Church blessed with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly Places in Christ, Eph. iii. 2, 6.

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The Subjects of the Text are the *Patriarchs, Prophets, and Old Testament Saints*, together with those that were departed this Life since the Commencement of the Gospel. They are stiled *Just ones*, a common Character of good Men in Scripture, *Gen. vi. 4. Noah was a just Man. Hab. ii. 4. The Just shall live by his Faith*; with Multitudes of other Texts. Now this Term must be understood in an *Evangelical Sense*, and so it sometimes notes those that are *justified* and accounted righteous through Christ; and sometimes those that are upright towards God and Man, are sanctified or made holy, and have perform'd the Conditions of the New Covenant. And upon no other Terms but these, in no other way but by being such, can we expect to arrive at this happy State of Perfection.

The Word *Spirit* is us'd either for the *Soul*, whilst lodg'd in the *Body*, as *Job xxxii. 8. But there is a Spirit in Man*; and *Acts vii. 59. Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit*. Or as separated from it, *Eccl. xii. 7. The Spirit shall return to God who gave it*. And so in the Text. Now there being such a *Distinction* betwixt the *Soul* and *Body*, the *Separation* of 'em can make but a *modal*, and no *essential* Alteration upon the *Soul*; the *Knot* or *Link* by which they are tied together may be broken, and the *Soul* remain whole, untouch'd, and unaffected. Two things are readily granted, *viz.* That all *compound* or *mix'd* Actions, those that are perform'd by a joint Agency of *Soul* and *Body*, do cease upon their parting; but not *abstract* ones, such as belong to the *Intellect* and *Will*. So likewise we acknowledge it's more difficult to have a *formal* Conception of a *separated* *Soul*, than of an *embodied* one. But thus it is, because we are *Strangers* to, and little conversant with *Spirits*; and because we are us'd to conceive of 'em as *conjunct* with the *Body* rather than *separate*. And seeing we are *embodied* *Creatures*, corporeal Notions and Conceptions are more easy and natural to us. But I shall mostly wave such Points, as being foreign to a Discourse of this nature.

To be perfect is to want nothing proper for a Being to have; to be consummate and accomplish'd, to have all things in their Ripeness and full Growth (of which more presently.) Amongst the Jews *holy Persons* are frequently stiled *perfect* or *perfected* ones; and the Terms *holy* and *perfect* are parallel and equivalent; and indeed Holiness is a glorious Badge or grand Branch of Perfection. And the rewarding of such is in their Phrase express'd by being put under the *Throne of Glory*. The original Word *τελειωμενοι*, borrow'd from the Grecian Exercises or Games, signifies those that have finish'd their Service, attain'd the End of the Race, and receiv'd the Crown or Reward they contended or strove for. Parallel hereto are those Christians that have pass thro' all the Exercises of their Warfare, have overcome and obtain'd a compleat Victory over all Opponents, and are triumphant in Heaven.

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The Words thus opened, we may form the Sense of them into these two Doctrinal Propositions:

1 Doct. *Separated Souls, the Spirits of just and holy Men are in a perfect and consummate State in Heaven.*

2 Doct. *The Christian Church has special Privileges of Nearness, Fellowship and Communion with the Spirits of the Just in Heaven.*

What great Subjects, and of how sublime a Nature are these? How happy would it be with us, if, whilst we are reading and hearing of 'em, our Hearts might receive a *Temper and Elevation* answerable thereunto? And some of the Celestial Flames that possess these Beings might inspire us, and an affecting Sense be begot in us of that State we have under Consideration.

The special Subject of our Enquiry, is, *What is the State and Condition of the Souls of good and holy Persons in the Period and Interval of their Separation from the Body*; from their laying it down, to the assumption or taking it up again at the last Day? And this is of the greater Concernment, because every one of us hath a Soul, which we must presently surrender into the Hands of our Judge and Rewarder, to be eternally dispos'd of by him. In order therefore to the more profitable Management hereof, there are these following Points claim our Consideration, and Resolution of 'em.

- I. We shall settle the Notion of Perfection, with respect to the Subject in hand, or how the Spirits of the Just may be said to be perfect.
- II. Shew how and when the Spirits of the Just commence thus perfect.
- III. Take the future State of Blessedness under Consideration.
- IV. Manifest wherein the Perfection and Happiness of the Just consists.
- V. Enquire into the Benefit and Happiness of commencing upon this State of Perfection. Of being conjoin'd and united to 'em.
- VI. Give you the Improvement of the Point. Of all which in their Order.

There are several other Heads might have been chosen to have discours'd upon. And there are besides, many things suppos'd and couch'd in the Words, which deserve a transient Glance and Touch. *Errors* that are overthrown, and *Truths* establish'd. As that the Soul is nothing but the *Temperament of the Body*: That it does not vanish into Air, or lose

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its Existence, (as Atheists dream.) That when they are separated, they are not scattered up and down as Vagabonds or Wanderers, (as the Platonists imagine) but are under a special Government, and are together in Societies, wonderfully rank'd and methodiz'd, and dispos'd of into Mansions appointed for 'em, according as they have acted their Parts in this World. So likewise, that whilst they are here, they lie under Weaknesses and Imperfections. And that the advancing them to a State of Compleatness and Perfection, is a remarkable and glorious Work. These, and such like, are of use to confute Infidels in their Denial of a future State, and to establish Religion, and confirm Believers in the grand Articles of that State; and are the very Foundation of those things we are going to treat upon.

The first General. *To settle the Notion of Perfection, with respect to the Subject in hand. Or how the Spirits of the Just may be said to be perfect.*

This Term is capable of a *strict or larger* Signification. In the first acceptation of it, we may note that there are several *Kinds* of Perfection, and various *Rules* by which we may judge a Being to be perfect, or not perfect. There's a *natural* and a *moral* Perfection. The Soul is capable of a Perfection in both respects, in the *latter* Sense it lies in *Grace, Holiness, and the Divine Image*. Sin has introduc'd the greatest Imperfection upon the Soul, and therefore to be recover'd from its Maladies and Effects, is a great Perfection. So there is a Perfection of the *present*, and a Perfection of the *future* Life and State. The *former* is a Perfection of Parts, Maturity and Proficiency. Thus *Abraham* was commanded to *walk before God, and be perfect*, Gen. 17. 1. i. e. Upright and Sincere. Sincerity is Gospel-Perfection, Phil. 3. 15. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect*. The latter is a Perfection of glorified Spirits, and this is either *incomplete*, when, tho' the Souls of Believers are perfected in Glory, yet their Bodies at present sleeping in the Dust, something is wanting to 'em. Or tho' they are perfect in themselves, yet not in their State till the Restitution of their Bodies at the Resurrection. Or *complete*, when both Soul and Body shall at the last Day be perfected in Glory; and have the full Vision and Fruition of Christ to all Eternity, when there will be nothing defective, redundant, or superfluous in 'em. Like as when a Picture has receiv'd its last and finishing Lines, is fill'd up, and has nothing to be added to it; or is as the Sun risen to its Meridian. This is the Perfection God is designing to bring his People to; in order to which, he's raising 'em out of the greatest Imperfections, from the lowest to the highest Degrees of it. But that

then, if we take the Word in its *larger* Acceptation, it may only import to us, the happy State and Condition of separated Spirits in Glory: As the *concrete* Terms of perfect and happy, so the *abstract* ones of Perfection and Happiness are parallel.

This is a desirable and glorious *Privilege*, may we experience the *Beginnings* of it in our Souls at present, and by passing through a Course of perfecting Means, make a *Progress* herein, till we arrive at the *Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ*, Eph. 4. 13.

And now by looking back upon this Point, we shall meet with what will be Matter of *profitable Reflection* to us. See something *peculiar to Man*, from all other Creatures, *viz.* The great *Improvements*, and *Advancements* that he's capable of and rais'd unto, above any other Being: (excepting the Humane Nature of the Redeemer.) That from a lost and sinning Child of Adam; yea, from the Mouth of Perdition, he's advanc'd to an *angelick and god-like Condition*. Sunk into the greatest Depths of Dishonour, and yet exalted to the Heights of Glory, like a Pearl taken off the Dunghill, that's polish'd, made glorious, and put to the noblest Uses. We reckon that it's a great Step from Childhood to Manhood, from a small Seed to a great Tree; but this is of a far higher kind. Those fade, decline, and return back again; but the Soul of Man will keep its Nature, Verdure, Beauty, Glory, and flourish everlastingly. What Love and Admiration does such Grace merit from us!

Second General. *To shew how and when the Spirits of the just commence thus perfect?*

This is so remarkable a Change (as has been already hinted) that its *Progress* and *Motion* is a Subject worthy of our Search and Enquiry into it.

The *Foundation* hereof, as of all the other great Works that pass upon the Souls of Believers, is laid in the *Renovation* of their Natures; begun in their *Conversion*, *Sanctification* and *Justification*. Then the glorious Principles are inlaid, the *excellent Seeds* then sown, that grow up to these mighty Things; so that we may properly call 'em the *Beginnings of Perfection, and Glory*. Now it's carried on and compleated by three Steps. 1. In the *Divestiture* or *putting off Mortality*. We cannot rationally doubt, but that the Body and all the sinful Adjuncts and Concomitants of it fall together; and are put off with it; like as *Elijah drops his Mantle* in his Ascent to Heaven, 2 King. 2. 13. Then the Lees and Dregs of his Being are purg'd away. True, these are most tenacious, and stick close to us in this Life; but when the Foundation of 'em is remov'd they must needs sink with it. 2. In

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the ripening of Grace and Holiness; laying the Lines, Colours, and Badges of Glory upon 'em. Which is done when they leave the Body, pass through the pure and undefiled Regions, and enter upon the heavenly Ones. Two things we are ascertain'd of, viz. " That at the instant of " the Soul's Separation, it lies under the Stains of Defilement, and Imperfection; and that at the instant of its Entrance upon the heavenly Regions, it's pure and without " Spot; (otherways it wou'd not have Admittance thither;) and has Badges of Perfection stamp'd upon it. And these two are mediate and near to each other. All that can

be objected here, is, that God's refining Works upon Souls are not performed so suddenly. But the

Sol. Answer is obvious, That whilst we are in this World, God is pleas'd to act by stated leisurely Rules and

Measures, in the purifying and ripening the Soul for Heaven; but when it's once commenc'd of another State, it falls under another Mode of Operations. We are slow in our Improvements in this Life, but this is no Argument that God proceeds not by quicker Steps, when we commence upon another Dispensation. For each State has a different manner of Operation. As the Spirit of God does gradually sanctify and ripen Souls in this Life; so may he by his glorious Rays let forth upon 'em at last, perfect 'em at one Stroke.

" To this purpose, says one, he can let out such warm Beams and Rays of his Spirit upon his Servants, as shall " soon maturate the Seeds of Grace into a Preparedness for " Glory. But we may add moreover, that Necessity, or the

Nature of the thing, requires the quick Performance of this Work upon Souls; because there's no time for any other Method. Surely God does not delay and keep Souls from Glory, that he may perfect this Work upon 'em. 3. It's finish'd by after Communications and Improvements; by heavenly Work and Exercises. That many improving Changes are then made, and that there's an Addition to the Stature of the Saints in Heaven, cannot with reason be doubted or call'd in Question. Of all Worlds, Heaven is the most improving one. And a further Maturity, and Proficiency cannot be inconsistent with, or incompatible to that perfect World.

But we may add as a close hereto, that there are other imperceptible and unknown Methods of Preparation for Blessedness, that are out of our Reach and Comprehension. But it's sufficient to know there is such a Work pass'd upon all holy Souls, and is glorious and wonderful beyond Imagination.

This Point yields us a most desirable Meditation, and especially those that languish under their Sins and Imperfections, that such a Work will presently pass upon them, and the

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Grounds of their Lamentations will be turn'd into Rejoycings, and swallow'd up in the *glorious State* they shall be advanced to: Oh the infinite Satisfaction that will result thence.

The Third General. *To take the future State and Blessedness under Consideration.*

We have had the *Preparation* of blessed Spirits for the future State under our Consideration; and now we come to make some Reflections on the *State in self*, where they have their Residence.

This State being so much out of the Cognizance and Sight of most, and yet so needful to be discover'd; and about which every one shou'd have the chiefest Concern to acquaint themselves with, and prepare for it. It cannot but be reasonable to give it a Place in this Discourse. How can we think of being Strangers to that World, where these blessed Ones have their Residence, and Abode, and with whom all good Men are in Communion?

The *Life* we are speaking of in its full Latitude, comprehends another very awful one: Where we shall find Spirits, but of another Character, and in a quite different State to the other. *Spirits* said to be in *Prison*, 1 Pet. 3. 19. (as some expound those Words) but this falls not directly under our Consideration. The State we have to do with, is a *luminous* and *glorious* one, and is a Subject of a *comfortable* and *joyous* Nature.

A World or Societies of Spirits may seem strange to *carnal Minds*, *unthinking Persons*; and those that wou'd dispute it down through the Vicioulness of their Lives. But when all things are consider'd, and the Arguments and Evidences that the Subject carries along with it, are weigh'd; it looks not only *probable*, but *certain*, and appears an unquestionable Object of Faith.

But you'll say what a one is a *World of Spirits*? Why, as in the corporeal World we find *Provision* made for every thing that's necessary for *Bodies*; so is there alike and greater *Preparation* made for *Spirits* in the Regions they are appointed to. The *Place*, the *Objects*, *Entertainments*, *Employments*, and *Delights*, are *spiritual*, and all things suited and agreeable to them.

Much of God's real Creation is *invisible*, both as to the Regions and Inhabitants of it. How little and narrow a Spot is the *visible* World comparatively to what *lies out of Sight*, and is undiscoverable to Sense. The *Spaciousness* and *Dimensions* of the *heavenly Regions* are beyond all Conception; the Habitation of Spirits is a World of *amazing* *Wonder*.

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But to carry this Argument further. If we reflect that the great Creator of all things is an *infinite Spirit*, and the *Father of Spirits*, as he is call'd, Num. 16. 22, 27, 16. Heb. 12. 9. Is it not very rational to conclude, that he wou'd create some Orders of Beings, that shou'd carry a *nearer Resemblance* to himself, and bear more of his Image upon 'em, than gross and corporeal ones do? And that as he has replenish'd part of his Creation, the meaner and lower part with Beings answerable thereunto; so likewise that he has done the same to the Superiour and more noble One; fill'd it with Beings of a higher Form, viz. with *Spirits* or *immaterial Substances*. Besides all which, may we not remark that *Scriptures*, *Providences*, *Ordinances*, *Sabbaths*, *Ministry*, *Seasons* of Divine Goodness and Patience, point as with a Finger to this State?

The Text and Context gives us a *lively Prospect* of this State; here we may set our selves in the View of that glorious World, and all the blessed Tribes of just and holy Ones. The Text *supposes* it, only acquainting us with the Inhabitants of it. The Context is made up of Expressions that bear a *heavenly Character*, and are evident Allusions to that blessed World. It's properly the *City of the living God*, Heb. 11. 10, 16. *the true Heavenly Jerusalem*. Heaven is the Seat of the glorious *Presence* and *Residence* of the ever blessed *Trinity*; where all the Persons of the Godhead shine forth in *Fullness of Glory*, and *Ravishing Manifestations*. Here it is that the Divine *Shechinah* and Glory exhibits it self *unchangeably*, *fully*, and *everlastingly*. There are *Beams of Glory* scatter'd up and down the Creation, but here's the *Seat*, *Center*, and *Confluence* of all. And answerably is it furnish'd with Inhabitants, the foregoing Verse mentions an *innumerable Company*, or *Myriads of Angels*; and the Text tells us, there are also *the Spirits of just Men*. Now these are so vast a Number as furnish and replenish these Regions. Heaven is a *consummate State* and *World*, and its Inhabitants are *consummate Ones*. As *imperfect Inhabitants* have their Residence in an *imperfect World*; so do *perfect Ones* become and possess a *perfect World*. The great God is more *exact* in furnishing such *excellent Regions* than any other part of his Creation. Heaven is the *Repository*, where he lays up his *choicest Jewels*. Such as these, the *Spirits of just Men* are consigned to these glorious *Mansions*, and appointed to the wonderful *Ministrations* and *Services* of it. These give *Attendance* upon the Throne, and *serve God Day and Night*. These are the *Chosen* of the Father, the *ransomed* and *justified* Ones of the Lord-Redeemer, and the *sanctified* and *perfected* Ones of the holy Spirit; and that have past under *infinite Care*, and a most *gracious Conduct* in all their way to *Glory*. What *high Characters* are these? *Spirits*, and
Spirits

Spirits perfected; not Infants, not Minors, not those that are labouring under Imperfections, but full grown, Mature and Consummate. So that every thing in this State may justly come under the Denomination of Blessedness. The State it self is a blessed One, the Inhabitants blessed Ones, and the Employments blessed Employments. Such as this is the World where these blessed Spirits are, and have taken up an everlasting Residence.

The *Properties* of this State are most observable, and a great Addition to the *Stupendousness* of it; and such as shou'd draw all our Cogitations and Regards upon it: To mention but a few of 'em. It is not a *temporary mutable* State and Residence for a while, but an *unchangable and everlasting* one. It's a *World that cannot be shaken, but abides for ever*, Heb. 12. 28. 2 Pet. 1. 11. Now than this *Term*, what can be *greater* in it self, and *more concerning* unto us? What carries a Sound with it like to the word *everlasting* or *for ever*? Nothing gives an *Accent* to any thing like to this. Every thing is *little* without it, and it makes every State and Condition *great* to which it is annex'd. What *indelible Impressions* has this made upon the *Minds* of many; but especially does it so upon those that are *Inhabitants* in that World, whether it be that of *Happiness* or *Misery*. Oh that it might sound something alike in our Ears now! An *everlasting* State of Rewards and Punishments cou'd not be *sighted*, if it were *believed*, and *attended* to. It's the losing the Sense of this great *Word everlasting*, that makes *Religion* and *this State* to be *disregarded*. And then our *Relation* to it, and its *Nearness* to us. The future Life is the *Receptacle* and *Ocean*, into which this present World runs, and *empties it self*. We our selves are such *Spirits* as are moving towards, and appointed to take up an eternal Abode there, and are indeed at the Door of it. May not every one say, how soon, how speedily, shall I commence a *separate Spirit*, and enter upon one of those States, where infinite Numbers already are, and where I must presently dwell for ever?

We call it the *invisible World*, yet we shou'd maintain a frequent *Conversation* and *Communion* with it; realize and make it visible and present to us; yea, account things *invisible* to be the *greatest Realities*. To do this is one of the great Offices of Faith, Heb. 11. 1. We shou'd always be looking beyond these *visible Heavens*, and things that are seen, into those *Regions* whither we must presently remove. 2 Cor. 4. 18. *While we look not at the things that are seen, but at those that are not seen*. From this State we shou'd learn to move and act in every thing, the Springs of our Actions shou'd be drawn thence. It shou'd have a commanding Power, Influence, and *Magnetism* upon us. We shou'd reckon it

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our Home, and never look upon our selves to be at rest while we are absent from it, 2 Cor. 5. 6, 8. Knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord.

To conclude, We should make this future State the sacred Repository and Treasury of all spiritual Excellencies. Here Treasures should be laid up, Mat. 6. 20. By Faith we should place our Happiness in it, and on that lay out our Care, and Love, and Labour. Luke 12. 33. *Provide your selves Bags, a Treasure in the Heavens, that faileth not.* They are to be accounted the happiest Persons, that have laid up most there; hither it is that Harbingers should be sent before us, to make way for our Reception and Admittance in time thither. Like as Christ went before, to prepare a Place for all his Followers, John 14. 3. so should every one do for themselves in particular; use all possible Care about, and make the utmost Provision for their Entrance at last into that Kingdom: And by so doing, we shall in time be united to these blessed Spirits, and be Partakers with them in all their Privileges and Felicities.

Before we dismiss the Thoughts of this State, let's by close Meditation endeavour to engrave it upon our Hearts, even as it were upon Marble; get a *convictive Evidence* of it in our Conscience, that it may be always abiding upon us; that what we do may be done in Remembrance of it; and so as may carry no Disagreeableness, but a Harmony and Likeness thereunto. And this brings us to the

Fourth General. *Wherein the Perfection and Happiness of the Just in the future Life does consist.*

Now the Answer hereunto lies in a twofold Consideration of these blessed Spirits. First, In a *personal* and single; and, Secondly, In a *collective* and *conjunct* Consideration of 'em; or as taken together, and making up one triumphant Church. And first of the former.

1. Their Perfection and Happiness may be consider'd negatively, in the Removal or taking away the *Imperfections* they lay under whilst they were in the Body. There are many things a Soul's unburden'd and releas'd of in quitting this Part, and these lower Regions, as was hinted before; and consequently, many *Inconveniencies* that redound to it, during its Residence below. Whilst the Soul's lodg'd in it, it bears a Resemblance to an *imprison'd* or *confin'd* Light, or is as a shining Diamond in a dusky Cabinet. The Body to the Soul is as a *gross Medium* to the Eye, that hinders or disturbs the Sight. *Corporeal* Organs are unfit for *Spiritual* Beings to act with. But upon the leaving it, all the Mists and Clouds of the present State are scatter'd, the Veils rent, and the Shadows fly away: Whereupon it obtains full Liberty and Scope for

for *Flight, Motion, and Exercise*. Here we might give a Catalogue of the Imperfections, Impediments, and Weights, it's at this time deliver'd from. "As a Mass and Load of Sins and Guilt, Weaknesses, Infirmities, Darkneses, Ignorances, Mistakes, Misconceptions, wrong and misplac'd Affections, Distances and Estrangements to God, Non-acquaintance with the heavenly Kingdom, its State and glorious Inhabitants, with other Things of a like Nature. These and many more, that are Concomitants of this present State, does a prepared Soul leave behind it, and has no more to do with them for ever. What potent Arguments are here, to be willing to put off and be releas'd from this earthly Clog, the Body?"

And here we might observe the Difference betwixt an embodied and separated Soul. An embodied one is clog'd, and as in Prison; a separated one is made free, and set at Liberty. The former is wrapt up, as it were, in Veils of Night and Obscurity. The other is brought in to the open and full Light, the very Light of Glory. That that's in the Body, acts by Instruments, this without 'em, in and of it self. The one's in a narrow World; the other in a spacious and boundless one. That's surrounded and encompass'd with unsuitable Objects; this in the midst of those that are agreeable to it, exciting and quickening, that are Helps and not Hindrances. Whilst its below, it's an Alien and Traveller, in a strange Country, Psal. 39. 12. But it's a Native of the other World, at its Home and Rest. The Soul, as descended from above, claims Kindred with Heaven. Whilst here, its Affections are scatter'd, sinfully wasted and weaken'd: But, out of the Body, they are strong, united, and conjunct, and restor'd to their proper Course and Channels. So that we see, that it is so far from being impair'd, or a Loser by its leaving the Body, that indeed it's a great Gainer thereby.

Happy Fruits and Advantages of this Disjunction! What may we conceive that Soul commences, that's disengag'd and quit of these Incumbrances, and has made so blessed a Change! It must certainly experience a great Alteration in its State and Condition: And therefore this Season may properly be called its *παύρησιν*, glorious Birth-day, or Creation. And hence we may see one Reason of the Apostle's Desire to be uncloath'd, 2 Cor. 5. 4. For we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened. And what is that other Scripture, but a Lamentation of a like Nature, 1 Cor. 13. 12, For now we see through a Glass darkly. When Dross is separated from Metall, then it appears in its true Lustre; when intercepting Clouds are taken away, the Sun displays its Brightness, and glorious Beams. Those are the greatest Glories and Perfections that emerge and rise out of such Oppositions; that Light the Brightest that breaks forth out of Obscurities and

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and Darkness. And so 'tis in the present Case.

How should these Considerations disengage us from the *Animal Life*, and our grosser Part? We may be hence convinc'd, that a Christian's *Losses* are his *Gains*; and great *Privileges* attend him in the *penal Changes* he undergoes. His *Breakings* up here, are in order to a more glorious *Existence* in a better World. His *Darknesses* break into a *Noon-day Glory*; his ceasing to see through a *Glass* darkly, issues in an open and full *Vision*. Thus when that which is *perfect* is come, then that which is (imperfect) in part, is done away, 1 Cor. 13. 10.

2. The *Spirits* of the *Just* are instated and endow'd with many *positive Perfections* and *Accomplishments*. The *Season* of the *Soul's Separation* is as an *awful*, so a *notable Conjunction*, upon several *Accounts*. Great *Changes* are then made, and many glorious *Things* then confer'd upon it: As there is an *uncloathing*, so there is a *cloathing* upon, a happy *Change* of *Raiment*, a taking off the *Vestments* of *Mortality*, and a putting on the others of a quite different *Nature*, 2 Cor. 5. 4. But *cloathed* upon. With what? With the *splendid Robes* of *Immortality*, an *undecaying Life*, and *endless Glory*. *Platonick Notions* are dry *Comments* upon *Scriptures* so copious and full of *Sense*. We must suppose every *State* that *Man* enters upon, carries its *Concomitants* and *Suitablenesses* along with it. As the *Attendants* of an *Earthly Court* are clad agreeably thereunto, so 'tis as to the *Celestial* one. None must appear before this *great King*, but in *Royal Apparel*. In order to *Joseph's* coming into *Pharaoh's* Presence, he was to change his *Garmments*, Gen. 41. 14. Even so we cannot suppose a *separated Soul* introduc'd or admitted into the glorious *Mansions*, without an agreeable *Furniture*, and *correspondent Preparations*, without an *Investiture* and *Instalment* into the *Dignities* and *Glories* that belong to that *State*. All must be *bright*, *pure*, *splendid*, *glorious*, and *consummate*, that enters the *celestial Palace*.

What *Variety* or *Degrees* there is amongst the several *Orders* of created *Spirits* in the *World* above, is beyond all present *Conception*; but this *Mystery* will be *display'd* in *Heaven*. Probably humane *Souls* originally have an *Inferiority* to the *Angels* (because they are consign'd to *Bodies*, and come short of 'em in *Perfections* now) yet our blessed *Saviour* seems to give 'em an *Equality* in the *future State*, Luke 20. 36. for they are equal to the *Angels*: Not only in respect of *Immortality*, (which is our *Lord's* Meaning) but as to other *Excellencies*; answerable to 'em in heavenly *Qualities*, the glorious *Stations*, *Ministrations*, and *Honours* of that *blest World*.

But

But to return, and carry on the Point further. *The Perfections and Accomplishments of separated Souls*, are either *general*, or *particular*; *natural* or *moral*, (as was observ'd before.) Of the former kind, are those that extend to the whole Soul, or belong to a particular Part or Faculty. As the Soul in general, to every Faculty will have its Glories and Perfections. Amongst the first, we may reckon their *Vitality, Immortality, Simplicity, Spirituality, Perceptibility, and Activity*. True, the Soul has these in the present Life, but they lie as in the Seed or Principle, and are not ripen'd as they will be hereafter. So likewise as to the *particular Perfections* of each Faculty; the *Understanding* will be render'd capable of those great and high Offices it was made for, be mightily improved in its Conceptions and Apprehensions. And the Will and Affections will likewise attain their true Rectitude and proper Position, and due Vigor. An *entire Meekness* must necessarily be granted in all the Parts of the Soul, to the heavenly State, its Objects, and Works. "The Faculty is more prepared (as one saith) as we are more purify'd and clarify'd from the Dregs of carnal Sense, and those worldly Vanities which blind the Mind, and divert the Heart from God."

But besides, the Souls of holy Persons will likewise have all *moral Perfections*, be consummate in all glorious Qualifications. Every Faculty will have its proper Furniture, several beautifying Accomplishments confer'd upon it. Like the Heavens they shall be bespangled with Stars and Gems, with all excellent Grades and Ornaments proper to 'em. Which will give 'em an orient Lustre and Brightness. Thus the Understanding will be made radiant and glorious in *holy heavenly Light, Knowledge and Wisdom*. And by a sound Estimate and Value of the noblest Things and Objects, and thus enrich'd and replenish'd, we may resemble it to a luminous Orb, that's without all Clouds and Darkneses, shining with perfect Clarity and Brightness; So likewise the Accomplishments of the *Will*, will lie in a perfect *Rectitude and Conformity* to the Will of God, the Heavenly Laws and Work, in a full Choice and Embrace of, and a strong *Adhesion* to the chiefest Good, and best Objects. Like as things cleave immoveably and unchangeably to their Center, the Glory and Beauty of the *Affections* will consist in their perfect Order and Elevation, in their right Temper and highest Fervours. Now they are scatter'd and weak, but will then join and run forth in one strong Current in Heaven, and all the Faculties will conspire in the most ready Execution and Performance of the Divine Pleasure.

Grace in the Soul at this time will not be like to what it is in this Life; but consummate, strong and perfect, grown up to full

full Maturity. The Spirits of the Just shall be advanced to an *immutable State* of Grace, and that shall be free from all Defect. Man was *perfect* in the *Earthly Paradise*, but *defectible*; but in the *Heavenly Paradise*, he shall have a *Confirmation* in all Goodness, shall be under an *Impossibility* of sinning, or losing Grace, or falling from his happy State. Whilst we are here, *Love* (as all other Graces) is *imperfect*, and as Fire out of its Element: But it will be otherwise in Heaven. There it will be like an immortal Flame, that shall have no Abatement. There *holy Complacency* and *Joy* will, like a Torrent, swell and rise to a full Tide, and overflow the Soul. And the like State hereto shall every Grace have, that shall be of Use in Heaven.

Hereunto we may subjoin, the *Holiness* and *Assimilation* of the Soul to God: Which is the Result of the forementioned Excellencies. With this glorious Quality the Spirits of the Just shall be over-spread. This is the heavenly Robe that will cover them all over: The very Lines of Glory, that give them all Splendour and Radiancy, becoming that glorious World. And this is one thing, in which Divines do chiefly place the Perfection of the Saints in Heaven. Some Rays of Holiness upon Earth, gives a mighty Amiability to Souls. How much more will it do so in Heaven, where they have it in Perfection; in that Measure and Completeness that a Creature can desire. What a glorious Body of Perfection will this be? God being the Original and Fountain of all Happiness, consequently Holiness and Likeness to him will be our Happiness, 1 John 3. 2. *We shall be like him.* This is what our blessed Lord came to restore, which is begun here; but the finishing of it is reserved for Heaven. The Saints shall attain to a complete Similitude to God at last. Eph. 5. 27. *They shall be without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing.* Here they resemble Christ, but they also resemble Adam; but in Heaven they only shew forth the Holiness and Purity of Christ. His Image there shines in 'em without Spot or Blemish.

How can we read and meditate of *such a State of Soul*, and not be fill'd with holy *Aspirations*, that we might have the Beginnings of these things laid in us whilst here, and the Consummation of 'em hereafter in eternal Glory?

Here some would be ready to enquire, What the State of damned Souls is as to this Point. To which it may be answer'd, That they will be like the Just as to the *Natural Perfections* of their Souls; will receive many *Advances* and *Enlargements* in their Faculties, by their Entrance upon the future Life. For as there is a Preparation of the Souls of holy Persons for *Rewards*; so will there be likewise a Preparation of the Souls of the Ungodly for *Punishments* and *Misery*.

serv. And yet they shall lie under the greatest *moral Imperfections*, be the direct Reverse and Opposites to the Spirits of the Just: Nothing but *Sin, Confusion, Irregularity, Disorder, Filthiness*, and what not of this kind.

2. Besides what we have already mentioned, there will be *additional Excellencies of the Spirits of the Just in Heaven*; of which there are few or no Footsteps in this Life. The *Endiments* of most of the Soul's Perfections are laid upon 'em in the *present State*, (like the first Lines of a Picture) in order to the complearing of 'em hereafter, the *Seeds* of most of 'em are sown now; but the *Flower and Ripeness* of 'em is reserved to the heavenly State. But what I'm asserting and advancing, is, that there are some *Celestial Excellencies* that holy Souls will be possess'd of *above*, of which we find nothing in 'em here *below*. Heaven being a State so vastly different to this we are now in, of such different *Objects, Work, and Services*, why should we account it strange, that the *Accomplishments* of Souls should be multiplied for it; no more than to assert, that when its come into this *World* it shall have other *Operations*, than when it was in the *Womb*. Now amongst these we may reckon the *Enlargement and Extension* of the Soul's Capacities; as to converse with, and give Entertainment to many things at the same time; to exercise a Multiplicity of Acts together. Here we can put forth but *single Acts*, and converse but with *one Object* at once; but this wou'd be no ways agreeable to the Heavenly State. Such narrow Capacities as we have here, will serve for such a narrow World as this we are in; but will no ways suit with so boundless a one as that above is. But what I would especially note, is the *Grace of Confirmation* that the Soul receives, to qualify it to bear those *Weights of Glory*, the amazing Things of the blessed World, that otherwise they would faint and sink under. As we see the holiest Men have done, in the lesser Manifestations and Out-breakings of Divine Glory, they have had in this Life. As the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 6. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone.* And the Prophet *Daniel*, chap. 10. 8. *Therefore I was left alone, and say this great Vision, and there remained no Strength in me, for my Comeliness was turn'd into Corruption.* So the Apostle *Paul*, 2 Cor. 12. 4. who heard *unspeakable Words*, which it was not lawful for a Man to utter; i. e. Matters with which he was overborn, and too great for him to give an Account of: These Manifestations bred an *Astonishment* in him. And yet in Heaven the *strongest Beams* beat fully upon separated Spirits, and they are made strong enough to bear 'em, and are not overborn by 'em. Now how can this be but by the *Grace of Confirmation*, and the Preparation of their Souls for Heaven. All which gives us Reason to assert, that as the *Mother's Womb*

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is to *this World*; so is *this World* (as a sort of another Womb) to *that above*. Such and a greater Difference there is betwixt them.

How does this recommend and shew us the great need of acquainting our selves with the *glorious and awful Majesty of God*, and with this *glorious World*, that is of so surprizing and high a Nature?

4. Their Perfection will lie in *their Operations, their Work, Employments, and Exercises*. This is what we call the *Life of separated Spirits*; a *high and noble Subject*, of which we shall treat in this place. There is such a thing as this in the Souls of good Men here below, and because it carries a near Resemblance to the *Life of God*, it comes under that high Character, Eph. 4. 18. But the *Life of Souls* in the future State is the *Perfection of this*. May the *Experience and Exercise* of it gain us some *Acquaintance* with it, and take off the great *Strange-ment* we are under to it.

There's a twofold Activity of Soul, a *natural and gracious* one; and these two united, make the *Current* the *twister*. *Weak Operations* are a sure Sign of an *imperfect State* of Soul; and *strong ones* of the contrary. The *Spirits of the Just* will be expedite and prepar'd for all the heavenly *Exercises*. Like the blessed *Angels*, who are represented with *Wings*, and as *Flames of Fire*, Psal. 104. 4. A State of *Happiness* is a State of absolute *Rest*, and yet of highest *Activity*. Some observe, that the *Motions* of good Men are the *quickest* when they are *drawing nearest their End*. We are sure, they are *vastly quicker in the After-State*. In Heaven there are never ceasing *Operations*; there's the *true perpetual Motion*. One Conception that we have of God, is, that he's a *pure Act*, and perfected *Spirits* will carry some *Resemblance* to him herein. It's *Sin* that makes Souls *motionless and dull*, clogs all their *Powers*; but *Grace and Holiness* recovers and restores them. The higher we ascend in the *Creation*, the more of *Motion and Activity* we shall find in it; and in no *Regions* so much as in the heavenly ones. Oh that some of this might descend into our dull Souls in this present State.

In pursuance of this point, I would observe, 1. *That there are eternal Principles of Motion and Operation in Souls*. They act with the like *Freedom and Promptitude* as the *Sun shines*. *Spirits* cannot lie still as *Stones*, and especially *sanctify'd and unpinion'd ones*.

2. *They'll have eternal Motives and Incitements to Operation*. Besides the *Springs* within 'em, there will be infinite *matter* from without to draw 'em forth to *Action*, as from the ever blessed *Objects and Work* they shall be appointed to. Oh what exciting, Soul-enflaming, and enkindling *Matters*; what unconceivable *Attractives* to *Motion* are there in Hea-
ven.

ven. While there's ground for loving God, reason for heavenly Services, so long these Operations will be perpetuated. Now amongst these heavenly Exercises and Employments, we may reckon,

1. *Intellectual or mental Vision, or Intuition.* There's Mental as well as Corporeal Vision. Of this we have evident Proofs and Footsteps in the Revelations, and Discoveries made to the Prophets of old; in which Representations of things were made to the Minds of holy Men. And hence it is, that the heavenly State is so frequently set forth by seeing God, Mat. 5.8. *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.* 1 John 3.2. *We shall see him as he is.* John 17.24. *That they may behold my Glory.* The Angels are not corporeal, yet they are said, *Always to behold the Face of our heavenly Father,* Mat. 18. 10. Where we are said to see God, it cannot be meant of the bodily Eye. Spiritual glorious Objects are as discoverable and agreeable to the intellectual Eye as gross Objects are to the Eyes of the Body, and before the bodily Eyes of the Saints can be made fit to discern heavenly things, they must receive a great Sublimation.

And here we might entertain our selves with the Contemplation of the Nature, the Extensiveness, Quickness, and other Properties of the celestial Vision. Oh the remote Casts and Projection that separated Spirits have above. Here we have many things to give a Termination and Interruption to our Sight. We can see but a small Part of this lower World at once, but it will not be so in Heaven: There's no such thing there, as the Weakness of the visive Organs; no false mistaken Representations of Objects, but all's strong and vigorous. We may probably conclude, That all the Celestial Mansions and Regions will be in View at once. The Intellect can see all ways at once; most certainly the manner of Vision will be adapted to the Place and the Objects of it. Here we see but single Objects, or but a few at once; but there the Sight or Vision will be of an universal Nature. To this purpose, saith a worthy Author, "The Understanding shall clearly see the most excellent Objects in that enlighten'd State. The glorious Manifestation of the Objects shall as much exceed the revealing of 'em here, as the Sun in its full Lustre does one Beam of Light, strain'd through a Crevice in the Wall.

Such as these are the true heavenly Opticks; so far different and elevated are the Operations of the Soul to corporeal Ones. It's a blessed thing to see an invisible World with an Eye of Faith: But how much more so will the full Sight of Glory be?

2. *The receiving, admitting, and giving Entertainment to divine Communications.* No World comparable to Heaven for the

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the Emission, and Impartment of glorious Beams. Every separated Spirit is the Subject of highest Communications, and Participations, receiving the glorious Rays of Light, and Love, that darted upon 'em from the blessed Trinity, Angels and Saints. The clearer the Glass is, the more exactly are the Images of things taken in, and represented by it. As the more dusky the Glass, the more imperfect is the Representation. Thus will it be as to the Spirits of the Just above; they'll receive all the Images of heavenly Things, where they will be impress'd, and remain without Defacement upon 'em. Here we repel the blessed Rays, cast back the Beams of Divine Favour darted forth upon us; but in Heaven they give the fullest Entertainment to all Impartments. In this State we are as narrow mouth'd Vessels, and have often lost our receptive Faculty; but there they will be most capacious, and fitted to receive all that's darted forth upon 'em; even like unto a burning Glass that gathers the Rays and Beams of the Sun into a Point. There they will have more and greater Communications, than if one was plac'd under the most vigorous and direct Beams of ten thousand Luminaries.

Shall not this make us cry out, oh blessed Spirits that dwell in this radiant World! Happy Privilege to have a Station here! no Hearts can ever be cold or dead that live in such a World; shou'd not this make us attempt to draw down (in some lower Degree) some of these Communications upon our selves here below? Oh look up by Faith and use the Means of Derivation, and then something of this kind will fall upon us thence.

3. *The Aftings of the Soul outward, or the Emanations and Flowings forth of it to divine Objects.* Such Communications being made to 'em as we mention'd under the last Head; we may conclude there will be answerable Returns made on their part back again. Every Act towards them, is seconded with another from 'em in answer thereunto. Love for Love, Endearment for Endearment; all the divine Favours and Instances of Grace, are return'd in highest Admirations, Gratu-lations, and devout Acknowledgments. Oh the Streams of holy Love, Delight and Joy, that flow from them towards, and upon the glorious, blessed Objects, with which they are surrounded! Separated Spirits are not like things that make no Report to the Touches made upon 'em; but as the best Instruments, make a sweet Sound and Melody, echo back to all Overtures, and Visits made to 'em. And herein the Exercises of the Will and Affections are especially employ'd. Love acted upon Objects, is, as the sending forth a Flux of Rays out of the Heart towards 'em; and Delight is as the feasting of the Soul upon 'em; resting in their Embraces with Satisfaction. A gracious Soul experiences something in

it self of these things in *this* Life. But that's but a *faint Shadow* of what's perform'd in Heaven.

What need to learn this *happy Work* of blessed Spirits whilst we are in this World? By which means an *Entercourse* wou'd be carried on betwixt Heaven and Earth. And an easy way of *ascent* thither be found out!

4. In the Performance of all heavenly Offices, *Worship and Services*. The *Superior World* is the grand and universal Temple; the true *Holy of Holies*, (of which *those below* were but *Types* and faint Resemblances) wherein *Incense* is not only offer'd once a Year, as of old, but *continually*. Every *Worshipper* in this Temple is a glorious *high Priest*, consecrated and sanctified for the most excellent Ministrations, *Rev. 1. 6.* And has made us *Kings and Priests* to God and his Father. Here every *Heart* is an holy *Altar*, on which *holy Fire* is burning and flaming without Intermission. We have a Model of the Celestial Worship, in *Isa. 6. 3.* One cried to another, and said, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts*, i. e. they sing in Confort the Praises of the Lord. And we may at least allude to that, *Rev. 4. 8.* They rest not Day nor Night saying, *holy, holy, holy*. The heavenly Worship is of the most excellent Kind, glorious, and excelling for its *Harmony*, for its *Fervours*, for its *Purity*, and for every thing that becomes so high a Service. Our Worship on Earth is deficient and incomplete, upon many or all Accounts; but theirs is complete, perfect, absolute; and in every respect attains the End of Worship, which is the exalting and honouring the great and ever blessed God, the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit.

Some call it a glorious express Acknowledgment of the "Wisdom, Love, Goodness, Grace and Power of God, in the Redemption, Sanctification, and Salvation of the Church by Jesus Christ, with a continual Ascription of all divine Honour to him in the way of Praise.

But to give our own Conceptions of this great Point a little more particularly. We may suppose it to consist much in these grand Acts following, viz. "In a profound Veneration of the ever blessed God; in deep Humiliation and Prostration before him. As the blessed Spirits are represented in Postures of standing before the Throne; why may they not be likewise conceiv'd in Postures of falling down before it; "And in high Admirations and Adorations of God; but how much does it exceed all Conceptions to apprehend this matter? And that in vocal Hallelujahs, Blessings, and Praises. "But besides all this, we may conceive that there "is a particular Worship of the ever blessed Trinity, personally and distinctly from each other. So, there is a "Worship perform'd to God the Father, peculiarly, for his "glorious Perfections, and Works of Creation, Government, "and

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"and Redemption, for the Contrivance and Scheme of it;
 "and bestowing so inestimable a Gift as a Saviour upon the
 "World. And a Worship perform'd to God the Son, the
 "Lord-Redeemer, for his Undertakings, Sufferings, and
 "Accomplishment of that ever to be admir'd Undertaking,
Rev. 5. 12. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power,
and Riches, and Wisdom. This seems to be an Emblem or Re-
presentation of the Celestial Worship. "And a Worship to
 "God the Holy Ghost for his Operations, Agencies, sancti-
 "fying and perfecting Works upon holy Souls: All the ever
 blessed Three being *alike glorious*, and having their *seve-*
ral Offices in the Salvation of Believers, all of 'em must con-
 sequently partake of that Worship that is perform'd in Hea-
 ven.

To this we might subjoin other *heavenly Offices*, of which
 we cou'd mention several; and therefore they seem to be in
 the wrong that limit the Celestial Worship to that *eminent*
Branch of it: *Praises and Thanksgivings*, and speak of this as
 the *sole Work* of that consummate and happy State.

How shou'd the Thoughts of this call up our Hearts to that
 World, and excite us to look unto it, acquaint our selves
 with those *wonderful Ministrations*, and draw a *Pattern* of ho-
 ly Worship from 'em? For certainly the *nearer* we come
 thereunto, the more *acceptable* will our Performances be; as
 contrariwise, the more we *deviate* from 'em, the more *disa-*
greeable they must certainly be. "Say then, aspire oh my
 "Soul, aspire, and breath after an Imitation of 'em! So
 much for the fourth Head. The Operations of the Spirits of
 the Just in Heaven.

5. *Their Perfection consists in their glorious Privileges and En-*
joyments. Some Communities and Societies on Earth have ma-
 ny Privileges; but those of the heavenly City above, exceed
 all others, are innumerable. There's more in the *least* of
 these, than in the *greatest* of earthly Privileges. To be in
 Possession of Heaven, a Citizen of the *Jerusalem* above, how
 incomparable and excellent? There all Honours and Digni-
 ties are enjoy'd in Perfection; there are all the perfecting and
 beatifying Objects and Fruitions. There's the Possession of *all*
good, and nothing wanting. In Heaven they live upon, and
 drink out of the *inexhaustible and living Fountains*, and enjoy
 an *everlasting and replenishing Good*, *Psal. 36. 8.* And hence re-
 sults and springs the Happiness of blessed Spirits, which is
 that other Branch, in which Divines place their Perfection.

And now to wind up what we have said upon the first
 Consideration of the Subject in hand. If we look back and
 put all these things together, we shall find Reason to acknow-
 ledge, that the State of separated Spirits is a *most desirable one*,
 and such as shou'd make us lay out our Care and Pains to be
 of this Number.

But

But this will further appear to be more so; if in the second place we consider 'em conjunctly. Now if there be so much Perfection in every Subject of these glorious Tribes, surely there's proportionably the same, or a greater, upon a part or all of 'em? If every single Star have its Lustre, much more will there result the like from a Constellation of 'em; and most of all, from their entire Complex Society. Now we may place this in these following Particulars.

1. In the Replenishments and Communications they have shed upon, and vouchsaf'd 'em in common. As every single Spirit that constitutes these Tribes, hath its several Portions and Share of Influences; so there's something answerably communicated to the whole. The Glory and Perfection of the Members lies in their Head; and surely there can be none comparable to this glorious One the Lord-Redeemer. To every real Member of the Body, he's a Head of vital Influence here below; but what is he to the glorified Ones in Heaven? Where his Communications are infinite and unmeasurable. What is every Beam from such an Head, but like so many Rays of Glory that add Splendour to all the Saints?

And hence we may conceive what Christ is to this blessed World; even as a glorious Sun to it. His Influence will send forth Life, and Light, and joyful Love upon 'em, even as the Sun sends forth its Motion, Light and Heat upon this World. Hence saith a Poet,

*Bright like a Sun the Saviour sits,
And spreads Eternal Noon.*

Gracious Souls reckon the least Degrees of these Communications as the Beginnings of Heaven; as the sweetest Entertainments they can have on Earth. What then, will they be in the boundless Outflowings of 'em in Heaven, where all partake of his Fullness, and are made compleat in him? Col. 2. 10.

2. In the glorious Disposition and Order, that separated Spirits, and the heavenly Societies, are digested and form'd into. They are not cast together like an Heap of Stones, or as a disorderly Multitude; no, they are methodiz'd according to the Rules of infinite Wisdom; and in ways proper and becoming that State in which they are. God is the God of Order, and the whole Creation was fill'd with it, till Sin dislocated and put every thing out of its place. But above all, the celestial Regions may lay the greatest Claim hereunto. The marshalling of the Israelites Camp in the Wilderness made it glorious, and was a Type of Heaven. Was the Method of Solomon's Court so admirable, 1 Kings 10. 5. and gave it such a great Beauty? What may we think that of the heavenly One does to it? The Consignment that's made of Souls to these and the other Mansions, is, with utmost Accuracy. As there are Orders of Angels, Arch-Angels, Principalities, and Powers, so we may conclude, there are the like Degrees and Orders amongst se-

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parated Souls. And hence are those Terms we sometimes meet with; *the Seats of the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Thrones of the Apostles and Martyrs, &c.*

This I find confirm'd to our Hands. "All above is Order and Light. Every Person and thing is in its proper Place and Exercise. Heaven it self is a Temple. God is on the Throne of Glory; the Lord Christ in his humane Nature is before the Throne; all the holy Angels, in the various Orders and Degrees of their Ministration, are about the Throne continually. So are the Spirits of just Men made perfect, in the various Measures of Light and Glory. And the same wise Disposition shall every one meet with in their Consignment to those Regions.

This Contemplation affords us Matter of Astonishment and Wonder, and adds much to the Perfection and Happiness of the Saints, and lays before us one Branch of the celestial Glory that's seldom taken notice of.

3. *In that there's no Mixtures of Imperfection amongst 'em.* None that are *unsimilar* and unlike the rest; no Society on Earth, *not the best* that can be found, but there's *Blamishes* in it, *Chaff and Tares* are mixt with *Wheat*, Mat. 13. 26, 27. *Dross* with *Gold*. But in Heaven there's none of this, nothing to allay, cloud, or obscure their Lustre, to deface their Glory; but all are *pure*, all are *consummate*. They are a *chosen Company*, every one has a Perfection proper to 'em, tho not all in the same Degree. Now how great a Glory must result hence? A Glory without any *Shades*, a Brightness without *Mixtures* of *Spots* and *Darkness*. Oh happy and consummate State and World!

4. *In the glorious Harmony and Union of the heavenly Societies; their absolute and perfect Concordancy and Love.* Unity and Love are the Bonds of Perfection; the Ligaments of their Union are high and excellent, they have an *Oneness* and *Sameness* of Spirit, are connected and animated with the highest *Endearments*. They have a *Likeness* to God; one and the same *Image* is upon them all, and drawn by the same *Hand*. They are *Sharers* and *Co partners* in the *Riches of Redemption* and free Grace, and *harmonize* in one and the same glorious *Work* and *End*, the incessant Service, Honour, and Glory of the ever-blessed God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Here it is, that the great Article of the *Communion* of Saints is practis'd in Perfection. So that they will be as *near* to each other as can be, not to loose their *Individuation*, and melt into one common Soul or Being.

The Manner of the *Intercourse* and *Communications* of blessed Spirits in the heavenly State is unsearchable, but it's express'd in Scripture by *Voices*, *Postures*, and *Gestures*. And in the heavenly Congress in the Mount, we find that *Moses and Elias talked with Christ*, Mat. 17. 3.

5. *In their Numbers.* *Thousands of Thousands minister unto him,*

him, and ten thousand times Ten Thousand stand before him, Dan. 7. 10. The Spirits of the Just are an innumerable Multitude. The Multitude of Abraham's spiritual Seed, as well as natural, is shadowed out by the Stars of Heaven, the Dust of the Earth, and the Sands, Gen. 15. 5. & 13. 16. & 22. 17. There will be so many as to replenish all the heavenly Regions, as will carry some Meetness to the Lord Redeemer's Undertakings, and become the Attendance of so great a Majesty, to whom they are to perform a perpetual Service. And yet this Branch of Perfection they are growing in (as in some others) because there's a daily Addition made to 'em. Multitudes are yet to be added to them, the Saints and godly Ones of this and all following Ages. As Multitudes of Drops put together swell to a mighty Confluence of Waters, even such like will the Collection of the Saints be at last. Now Numbers and Multitudes add much to the Glory and Perfection of States and Societies; especially when they are all choice and excellent that compound and make 'em up.

6. We might close, with the Consideration of *the glorious Properties of the Celestial Privileges and Enjoyments*: As that they are *sure, undecaying, unperishing, immortal, perpetual, everlasting.* But these we may enlarge upon in our own Meditations.

And thus we have consider'd this Head of Discourse in these two Branches; What is here for *Souls in Flesh* to look back upon, and make the Matter of their *serious Entertainment.* There are many other things besides which add to the further Advancement of holy Souls; but the Darknesh we're at present under as to this State, hinders our giving a further Account of it.

Here we may justly be fill'd with Shame, that we know and can say so little of the Case of *separated Spirits*, and speak so disagreeably about such *concerning Matters*, what occasion to cry out, *Alas our Darknesh! Alas our Dillance!* that we know, feel, can utter no more of things so great, so sure, so nigh, and of such vast Importance to us!

Fifth General. *Enquire into the Benefit and Happiness of commencing upon this State of Perfection, and being conjoin'd and united to the Spirits above.*

What has been said already upon the former Heads, is a full Proof and Confirmation of this Point. No Honour or Elevation can bear a Parallel, or pretend to a Competition herewith. It should be the Ambition, Concern, and Aim of all of us, to be enroll'd, register'd, and number'd with these blessed Ones.

1. *This will be the Termination and Period of a Christian's Course and State of Trial, an Accomplishment of their Warfare, Isa. 40. 2. and put an End to all their wrestling, military Exercises.* Then there will be a perfect Discussion, of all their

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Fears, Doubts, and Perplexities they lay under, about their *Dangers* of missing and falling short of *Blessedness*. Even as when the *Mariner* is come into the *Port*, all *Fears* of a *Shipwreck* are vanish'd. When the *Victory* is obtain'd, and the *Goal* won, the *Contention* ceases, and the *Prize* is secur'd, and out of *Question*. What *unknown Joy* and *Pleasure* accompanies a new attained *Conquest*. The *Celestial Glory* foreseen, and look'd upon at a *Distance*, does extraordinarily inspire and invigorate *Souls*. Hence sprung the *Triumph* of the *Apostle*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 7. *I have fought a good Fight; yea, and a greater than he, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross*, Heb. 12. 2. *Happy time!* When all *Clouds* shall be blown over, and all *Storms* cease in an everlasting *Calm*. And thus it will be, when the *Soul* shall make its *Entrance* upon this blessed *State*.

2. *In a Conjunction with blessed Spirits there will be an Accomplishment of long and intense Desires and Expectations.* This is what every true *Christian* has in the *Principle*, tho too weak and little in *Exercise*. Now, than the *Accomplishment* of the *Desire*, there's nothing more agreeable to humane *Nature*. This the wise *Man* tells us is *sweet to the Soul*, Prov. 13. 19. And in ver. 12. that *when the Desire cometh, i. e. the thing desir'd, it is a Tree of Life, i. e. the Man's pleas'd and satisfy'd, as if he were fed with Apples of Paradise.* The *Accomplishment* of the *Desire* is a kind of *new Life* to the *Soul*, and causes dead *Hearts* to revive. How much more will 't be so in the present *Case*, when there shall be an *universal Satisfaction* of all *Desires*. When a gracious *Soul* is brought to *Heaven*, and the *Spirits* of the *Just*, it may say, this has long been the *Matter* of my *Hope*, and all my *Expectations* are concentr'd and fulfill'd herein. *Heaven* is the blessed *State* and *World* they have been long conceiving of, and what it was to be there. But they now feel indeed what it is; and all the imperfect *Ideas* of it are vanish'd, by a full *Representation* and *Fruition* of these blessed things. Now what a *Spring of Complacency and Happiness* will result and flow hence?

3. *This will enstate 'em in, and give 'em the Fruition of all the glorious Privileges of that happy World.* Every true *Believer* is *infranchis'd* of *Heaven*, whilst he's here below. Phil. 3. 20. *For our Conversation is in Heaven:* But upon their *Arrival* there, they are actually *invested* with 'em. All the *Immunities, Glories, Felicities, Honours, Dignities, Communications, and Fruitions* of it, are confer'd upon 'em. They have a *Possession* equal to the rest. The heavenly *Inheritance* is enjoy'd in common by all the *Blessed*, even like to the *Primitive Church*, that had all things common, Acts 3. 33. The *Propriety* and *Possession* of *Heaven* is not like to earthly *Tenures*, where one has one part, and another, another, and so on; but every one enjoys the whole. "God is a Father to all alike; Christ a Head to every one, and all are joint-heirs

" of the same Patrimony. The *Multitude* of Co-heirs does not lessen the Inheritance, nor make the Privileges less glorious. Who can fully estimate the Worth and Excellencies of such Enjoyments ! Oh happy *Season* and *Moment* indeed, in which good Men shall be so dignify'd and advanc'd, receive Crowns and Rewards, and be inaugurated into all the Glories of that Kingdom. At this time all the heavenly Treasures will be open'd, and all the Riches of Glory exhibited. Here God will make *unconceivable Representations* of the Glory of his Wisdom, Love, Grace, Goodness and Mercy in Christ. Here there will be a full Manifestation of the Glory of the Lord Redeemer, in his *Person* and *Offices*. Then there will commence an Acquaintance with blessed Spirits, yea, with all that we have so highly esteem'd, and long'd to know and be acquainted with. Nothing (that is needful or fit to be known by us) will be then unknown to us, neither any of the Mansions or Inhabitants of 'em. Our blessed Lord has represented the Communion of the Saints in Heaven, as a considerable Branch of the Felicity of that Place : Mat. 8. 11. *Many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God : Sit down ;* an Expression oft us'd, to signify the Rest and Pleasure the Saints shall have in Heaven in one another. But who can number the *Jewels of the Celestial Diadem*. Such a Happiness as this will the Possession of the heavenly Inheritance amount unto.

4. *Heaven will be an everlasting Abode and Place of Residence.* An Harbour of eternal Peace, Rest, and Satisfaction. They are not taken to Heaven to have some *hasty and transient Views* of it only, to stay for a certain Number of Years or Ages, but for, for ever ; it's an *everlasting Possession*. Here they shall meet with a *never ending Scene* of Delights and Pleasures ; some things carry a great Appearance of Happiness, and in a while ebb and run to nothing ; but all things here shall hold the same Tenour without any Decay or Abatement. So unconceivable a Happiness will an Entrance upon this blessed State amount unto.

I wou'd conclude with some Reflections upon *two Things*.
1. *The Introduction and Reception of the Spirits of the Just into Heaven.* 2. *The Prospect they will have of it upon their Arrival there.*

1. *The Introduction and Reception of the Saints into Heaven.* Now in this Affair we shall find much of the *Ministration of Angels*, who are truly stiled by some, the heavenly Convoys and Porters. The Translation of *Elijah* to Heaven was the Office deputed and committed to them. The Chariot of Fire was a bright or luminous Cloud, manag'd and conducted by these blessed Spirits, 2 *Kings* 2. 11. And the Scripture is most express in the Case of *Lazarus*, Luke 16. 22. that he was carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom. And consequently we may conclude the same Honour and Favour is vouch-

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vouchsaf'd to all departing Saints. Now if they have so honourable a *Convoy*, we need not question but their *Introduction* and *Reception* into Heaven will be answerable thereunto. The Case of our Blessed Lord's *Ascension* may give Light to this Subject. He was attended by Guards of Angels on the Way, and his Introduction was with the Congratulations, Applauses, and Welcomes of Angels, and all the ransomed Tribes. And proportionably may it be so with the Members. Certainly their Admittance and Reception will be with wonderful *Endearments* and Kindness. Oh the *Joy*s that will be express'd at their Arrival! As those that are landed stand upon the Shore, and joyfully welcome the safe Approach of others to 'em; so 'tis in the present Case. Surely the Heirs of so great a Kingdom shall not want a royal and glorious Introduction, and Enstalmment. And how probable is it, that our Blessed Lord will bear a great Part in this Matter. He that rejoyc'd in the *laying the Foundation* of their Salvation, will much more do so in the *finishing and laying on the Top-stone* of it; all which will be accompanied with that solemn Act of his *presenting them to the Father*, Jude 24. to all which that Text seems to have respect, 2 Pet. 1. 11. *For so an Entrance shall be administred to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom, i. e. You shall have a free and glorious Admission into, or go with full Sail to Heaven.*

2. *The Prospect they will have of Heaven upon their Arrival at it.* To be brought to the Borders of a new Region, or Country, is very entertaining; to have all the Glories of a sumptuous Palace expos'd, creates Pleasure. What then will the *first Views* of Heaven amount unto? To behold the *Master-piece of the Creation*, that World that contains the Quintessence of all, that's so adorn'd, replenish'd and enrich'd. How unspeakable will this be? What Spectacles, how numerous and glorious, will be here presented to 'em, that will captivate, surprize, and ravish 'em? How admirable will it be to see the *dazzling Glory of this Temple*; the *Choirs of Angels*; the *Converts of all Generations and Churches* in their Ranks and Stations; their *Method* in their Attendances and Services about the Throne; the *Ministrations and Adorations* paid to the blessed Trinity; to behold the *Consignment* of them to their Seats of Glory; to look through all the *glorious Mansions*, with Infinite more, how surpassingly ravishing and affecting must all this needs be. But oh how dead is such a *Narrative*, how faint a *Draught* is this of the Matter, to what the *real Transaction* of it will amount unto. And this leads us to the

6 General. *The Improvement of the Point*; in two Branches.

1. *By way of Inference, and 2. Exhortation.*

1 Inf. *This State, and these Societies of blessed Spirits, shew us a contrary State of damned ones, and, what to collect concerning*

ing their Condition. Does it need to be a Matter of Question? Or doubt, whether revolted and impenitent Spirits be in Existence; and have Regions of Miseries assign'd to 'em? *Contraries and Opposites prove and confirm each other:* A *Strait-line* tells us there's a *crooked one*; *Light*, that there's *Darkness*; and *Darkness*, that there's *Light*. Oh awful State and Condition! here we shou'd believe and view with trembling.

2 Inf. *We may hence see how we shou'd carry towards our Souls, that are the Subjects of such great Revolutions; how we shou'd use 'em, train 'em up, and in what to employ 'em.* Keep up the *Distinction betwixt Soul and Body*, separate from one another. How improvable a Being is the Soul of Man, and how necessary and valuable all Improvements of it are. These that we behold here, *perfect, shining, glorious Ones*, were once as *dark, weak, and infirm*, as we now are. Let us then carefully use all *cultivating Means* that we may arrive to their *Pitch, Stature, and Perfection*.

3 Inf. *This fully condemns all degenerate and fleshly Practices; whatsoever debases, corrupts, and brings down this divine and noble Part.* Instead of sinking our Souls, we shou'd elevate and raise 'em; instead of *defiling 'em*, *purify 'em* what we can; manage 'em as *Descendants of another World*, and as those that are *returning and upon Motion thither again*.

4 Inf. *How proper and needful is it to get right Notions of, and acquaint our selves with spiritual Things and Beings, with the Notions of spiritual Substances, and their Properties of Immateriality, Immortality, and Spirituality.* This wou'd greatly cure our *Unbelief and Ignorance*, remove our *E-strangements to Souls*; and facilitate and strengthen our *Faith* in the Articles of the Christian Religion.

5 Inf. *See hence the Connexion and Harmony betwixt natural and revealed Religion.* The first is the Foundation for the other to build upon. It's a Principle of *natural Religion*, that the Soul is immortal, and *revealed Religion* confirms and clears it; and works upon it to improve it by *Grace* to its due and proper Heights, and make it fit for the heavenly Mansions and Services.

6 Inf. *Oh the glorious Riches of redeeming Grace and Love, through and by which all these great Things are accomplish'd upon Souls!* This is the great Source and Original of all these Operations, and wonderful Transmutations that are made upon the Spirits of the Just.

Second use, Exhortation.

1. *Behold here the great Duty of Christians, not to be Strangers to these blessed Spirits, and that State and World they are in Possession of: To converse and hold Communion with 'em, and be ever aspiring towards 'em.* Here are they that have obtain'd the Victory, won the glorious Prize, and share in the purchased Rewards. The Enjoyment of God in Heaven shou'd be the

the Desire, Ambition, Mark and End of all Believers. This shou'd be the Point and Center of all our Motions, Interests, and Endeavours.

There are two things of special Concernment to us about blessed Spirits. How we may hold Communion with 'em here : And how we may be united to 'em, enter upon that World and those Societies when we dye. The Church-Triumphant, and Church-Militant are like two Sons of the same Father, one of which is grown to Maturity, and is put into Possession of all the Privileges of the Family ; and the other in his Nonage. Now those that bear so near a Relation, shou'd not surely forget one another. Now the Means and Helps hereto are such as these :

1. *Acquiring a Similitude and Sameness of holy Qualities with 'em.* Getting the same Divine Likeness, the same heavenly Image engraven upon our Minds as is on theirs. An Assimilation of Minds and Tempers lays a great Ground of Union and Communion, Coloss. 1. 12.

2. *By a Life of Faith, and the Exercises of Grace, in reference to those blessed Spirits, their State and Work ; making 'em the Objects of our Love, our Joy, and Complacency.* What are the Spirits of the Just, but the Transcripts and Images of God himself ? And what delightful Objects are such for us to converse with ; that are both like to God and near unto him, and by holding Communion, with which we shall ascend into those blessed Orbs where they have their Residence.

This is one grand Branch of a heavenly Conversation, Phil. 3. 20. they that can truly say they do live much above, have a sure Testimony that themselves are going thither ; as on the other Hand, not having our Conversation there, is a dangerous Argument, we shall not have our Lot in that World at last.

3. *In harmonizing in Work and End with 'em, in Aspirations and Desires after a Conjunction with 'em.* When a Soul can say, I long, breath, and thirst after a Union with 'em ; with them I wou'd have my Lot cast ; with them I wou'd take up my eternal Residence ; that World, those Societies are the Matter of my fervent and most vehement Choice ; none like to these, next to God, in all the World. What an undoubted Evidence is this, that such shall in a while be numbred with 'em ?

4. *Getting into, and improving our Interest in and Relation unto Jesus Christ, the common Head of these blessed Societies ; growing up in him, Eph. 4. 15.* By this Way and Means it is, that so many are advanced thither, and there is no other way of Ascension to 'em, but in and through him, John 14. 6. Those that will be his glorious Members above, must have a real and saving Implantation into him, be united to him here below. The Lord-Redeemer has the Keys of Life and Glory ; and there-fore

you will certainly see to the Admission of all his *Members* thither.

Alas! Alas! That there is such an Estrangement, Alienation, and Distance betwixt the Spirits of the Just in Heaven, and good Persons here below! when within a little while they shall be numbr'd of some of those glorious Societies. They look down to us and put the Query, *When will you make your Ascents and be join'd to us?* And surely then we shou'd send up our Hearts thither, and answer 'em, saying, *We long to be with you, are waiting at the Door; have but little more of our Master's Work to do, some more Fitness to acquire, and then we'll come away.*

Exhort. *Behold what great Relief and Comfort these Words minister to us under the Deaths and Removals of pious Persons; whether Ministers, Parents, Children, Friends or Acquaintance.* The Text affords us a *powerful Cordial* and great Support in these Cases; if Unbelief, and our bad Hearts did not hinder our applying and making use of it. Lo here in *this World of blessed Spirits* are all our departed Christian Friends. Here we may look up to 'em with *Triumph and Joy*: They are *inglorious Mansions*, under the most *desirable and happy Government*; with the *best of Company*, the *Flower and Quintessence of the Creation*, and about the most *noble Work*. This may administer great Comfort and Matter of Rejoycing this Day, and make us lift up our drooping Hearts, and our sinking Heads and Countenances. Search and look amongst these perfected Ones, and there you may see our Reverend and Worthy Father, Brother, and Christian Friend; he was lately a *compound'd Being*, as we yet are; but having put off *Mortality and Weakness*, is now become a *separated and perfected Spirit*, and is assign'd to, and has taken his *Place* amongst 'em. He was so well known to most of you, in his *Person, Labours, and Conversation*; that I need not draw his *Character* at length.

He was born at *Weston in Darbyshire*, and had part of his Grammar-Education at *Chesterfield School* in that County. After due Improvements in Learning, he was sent to *Christ's College in Cambridge*, and put under the Tuition of Mr. Ball; Son to the Eminent Mr. John Ball, who is well known by his excellent Works that are common in many Hands. He was call'd in that *happy time* of the last Age, when the Spirit of God by his *bountiful Infus*, rais'd up many eminent ones both in Piety and Learning, for the Service of the Church; in both which he shar'd his Proportion with others of that Day. When he return'd from the University, he was for some time in the Family of Mr. Westby of *Ransfeld in Yorkshire*; from thence he remov'd to *Basson in the Peak*, in the aforesaid County; where after the *Exercise of his Ministry*, for some time he was call'd to *Sheffield*, to be one of the Assistants of that Town in 1559. In which Post he continued about seven Years, where the killing *Bartholomew-A* cutt out him in 62. with many more in the Kingdom. So that he was one of those *eminent Lights*, that one wou'd have thought an All-wise Providence wou'd never have suffer'd to have been put under a *Bubel*. A Matter so mysterious and intricate, and as

difficult to give a Solution of, as any perhaps that fills out in many Ages. By this *excluding Act*, the Intrenchment about the Church was made so high, that it cou'd not be mounted by him no more than others. And had not this answer'd the *End*, that some were then pursuing, they wou'd have made it still higher and larger, as some have declar'd, that knew the Intreagues of those times. And no wonder if we consider at what *Forge*, and by what *Counsels and Hands* this Act was form'd and wrought up, and what it was to be a *leading to*. The *Sacrifice* of about two thousand such Men was the *Joy of Rome*, and one of the *greatest Blows* that was ever given to the *Protestant Interest* in this Kingdom since the Reformation.

He had a *clear Sense* of the Point of Non-conformity, and no *Hesitancies*, but very much *Satisfaction* thereabout, as many that have been Ear-witnesses of his Discourse, about those controverted Points are able to testify.

His *Relation and great Love* to that Congregation, from which he was so *rent*, was I suppose one *great Reason*, that he fix'd his Residence in that Town. Notwithstanding the advantageous Offers he had in other Places. Here's a *true Shepherd* indeed that will live and dye by his Sheep.

How and in what *Posts* he spent the rest of his time is well known to several of us. The sober Gentry of those Parts had a great *Value* for him, and he exercis'd his Ministry much amongst 'em; and very frequently in some Parts of his native County; and was a *great Instrument* of holding up and nourishing Religion in Families by that Means. Besides which he kept up a constant Fortnights Lecture in his own Town, for the Space of *forty five Years*, from 62. to his Death, where for several Years there were many *neighbouring Ministers* his Hearers, till Death and the Act of Indulgence and Liberty call'd 'em away. But for the ten last Years of his Life, he much exercis'd his Ministry in the neighbouring Congregation at *Attercliff*.

His *Learning, Piety, and ministerial Abilities* made themselves evident and conspicuous: He had a *warm Heart*, a *clear methodical, consuetudinal Head and Judgment*, by the Help of which he went further into several Points than most do, as his intelligent Hearers have often observ'd. And his tenacious Adherence to, and repeated pressing some Duties, was, I doubt not, because he judg'd they wou'd minister and conduce much to the Honour and Glory of God and Religion, and the Benefit of Christian Societies.

He was the *Husband of one Wife*, 1 Tim. 3. 2. in whom he had a great Blessing. She was a gracious Person, one of much Humility, Patience and Resignation, with other Virtues; and fit to accompany him in the Difficulties of a non-conforming State. They were *Fellow Sojourners* together above thirty Years, and he surviv'd her more than twenty. By her he had two Sons and five Daughters, four of which (of the latter) through Mercy are yet living.

He met with a *Course of comfortable Providences* during his Non-con-

conformity; and particularly upon *two Accounts*. In that he was screen'd from the *Persecutions* that some of his Neighbour Ministers underwent. And also in the Provision and Supplies that were reach'd to him from that bountiful Hand, by raising him up Friends and other Means of Support. And he has sometimes said, he could be large in his Accounts of the Goodness of God to him, upon this and other Occasions. But all this Goodness was intermixt with *some sharp Family-Afflictions* and Exercises, which were directed to his Good.

You are also acquainted with his *Conversation towards others*. He had a *Latitude of Judgment* above some of his Brethren. He knew very well what was the true Habit that belongs to religious Worship, but would not refuse *Occasional Communion* with his conforming Brethren; (of which I my self have sometimes been Witness.) And had respect for all *pious and godly Ministers*, whether of one or of another Denomination (yet chiefly exercising his Zeal about the *Fundamentals of Religion*, and bearing a just Testimony against *humane Impositions*, and *unlawful Terms of Church-Communion*) and kept up a loving Correspondance with 'em to the last; of which the following Relation is a sufficient Proof. A little after his Death, going to wait upon one of the Assistants of that Town (my old Acquaintance) who was then languishing, he was pleas'd to express himself in these Words, *Good Mr. Prime is got to his Rest with much Peace and Comfort*. And that worthy Person, a little after, follow'd him to that blessed Rest. The Lord give us more of so happy a Spirit and Temper.

He continu'd his Labours till Weakness and Infirmities disabled him. He was a very solemn Observer of *Bartholomew-Day*, and the last Sermon he preach'd on that Occasion was in 1707. from *Josh. 14. 10.* first part of the Verse; *And now behold the Lord has kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five Years*. After which, Sickness and Weakness came on in the Winter following; and when he had run a Course of about 77 Years, he expir'd on *April 26, 1708*.

To close this brief Account. One great Excellency or Beauty of a Minister or Christian lies in his Interiors, in the Frame of his Heart, and its Operations God-ward. And could we see this part of 'em, it would make 'em appear more amiable to us; but these being Secrets, lie out of our Sight, and cannot be drawn by us, or given an Account of: So that its only the exterior and visible part that admits of a Description.

Thus are we left naked! Oh how fast do our *Bartholomew-Lights* fall from their Orbs! Fall, do I say; So 'tis as to us; but it is that they may ascend, and be made *brighter than ever*. How lately was a *Sylvester* snatch'd away, and then a *Tallent*, and now our *Prime*. Let us that are here, hear the *Voices of this awful Providence*, and make a suitable Improvement of it. I wou'd pursue this briefly under three Heads. 1. *To his Children and Relations*. 2. *To the Congregation*. 3. *To my Brethren in the Ministry*.

To the first. *Walk worthy of, and suitable to such Privileges,*

is known, that they will find Honour more in Name, than in Money: but the Country, Discour. Now the *Craving* must be desired, that you must persevere your selves to be *Founders* of *Grace*: And then that the *Prepar* he has put up for you, and your own personal *Prayer*, will be a great means of carrying you comfortably through the World. The maintaining and improving the *Course* of your *Studies* will be your great interest and Happiness. And be sure, that every thing unworthy of the *Ministry*, and the Advantages you have enjoyed, be watchfully avoided.

Secondly, To those that attended his Ministry. He must hear his Voice: and for his *Grace* we must *Recall*, and live to purpose the *Truth* he was and preaches upon you. That of Christ to the Church of *Sardis* is proper for you, Rev. 3. 3. *Remember therefore thou hast this, and hast attained, and heard, which I have said and repeat.* When Ministers are dead, the great *Truths* they preached to us should have a new and living Force upon us. Think with what Zeal and Labour he preached and prayed, and that thought he dead, be yet *Present*. Heb. 13. 3. Let the Sound of his ministerial *Course* continue and abide upon you. And ever, and above follow his *everlast Example*. To close, Let his Death bring you near to him. He has showed you, that you must put off these earthly *Things*: precisely, as he has done his.

Thirdly, To my Brethren in the Ministry. This Providence has a loud Voice and Call to us. Our excellent Fathers and Elders are gone, and taken up from us: What ministers are that are their Successors? *Prey* unto that Spirit, that dwells amongst us, and say, *Yes*. And remember, that Learning, Piety, Diligence, and Success in the Ministry, will be the stable Pillars of the Nonconforming Interest. What need to say, that Cause is worthy and just, and concerning to Religion, do not lope or fall under Diffidence, and the Blasts of Providence, through our Default. And let's be sure, but show our selves Sons of Peace of Love, Concord, and Unity, and give to us wisdom and strength *the right Hand of Holiness*, Gal. 2. 2. The willing eyes of every Labourer, should make those that see, lest beheld men in ill repute. Let us see to the avoiding of Idleness, Sloth, Cavillous Worldliness, all unworthy Designs, and everything of that Nature that would dishonour our high Profession. And may the Spirit of Grace and Holiness rest and abide richly upon us, that we may be guided and directed in all things to the Glory of God, the Benefit of the Christian Religion, and the Church of Christ in these Kingdoms. In a word, Let us do what we can to edify and regain the Spirit of the *Reformed* Church, and of the *Primitive Churches* and Congregations amongst us.

And upon this concluding Word, *Remember*. Be ye therefore ready for in such an Hour as ye shall see, the Son of Man coming. Mt. 24. 42. And let your Lights be lighted, and your Loaves burning, and ye may when the Son of Man shall come for the Lord, that shall be your end and finish, it may open to him immediately. Luke 12. 37. 38.

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